

## Historic Overview

The Hickison Summit area of the Great Basin is rich in prehistoric and historic resources. Not only are there petroglyphs such as found here at the Hickison Petroglyph site, but there are numerous prehistoric hunting and living sites dating back as far as 10,000 BC. Historic sites include the trails of frontier explorers, John C. Fremont and James H. Simpson, the Pony Express Route, the Overland Stage Route, mining camps and ranches.

Prehistoric sites dating back 11,000 to 12,000 years have been recorded in Big Smoky Valley, the next valley west on U.S. Hwy 50, and Monitor Valley, where you are now. At that time, many of the valleys in the Great Basin supported large lakes. Big Smoky Valley had two such lakes, Lake Toiyabe, about 25 miles south of here, and Lake Tonopah, southwest of Tonopah, Nevada. From the distribution of these early archaeological sites, it appears that people were living around these lakes and exploiting the abundant plants and animals dependent on the lakes. Archaeologists refer to this early period of human occupation of the Great Basin as the Western Pluvial Lakes Tradition.



As the climate changed, becoming drier through time, the ways in which people lived changes. The lakes dried up and people began to rely more on upland resources, such as mountain sheep, antelope and deer, and plants including Indian rice grass and pinyon pine. By the historic period (1850), the Western Shoshone, the people EuroAmericans found already occupying the central Great Basin, were hunters and gatherers living on a wide variety of plants and animals.

The first EuroAmericans to see this portion of the Great Basin were John C. Fremont and his surveying party. In 1845, Fremont and his men passed just south of here, roughly along the route of U.S. Hwy. 50. Fourteen years later, on May 26, 1859, Captain James Simpson and his party crossed Hickison Summit into Big Smoky Valley on their way west. Simpson had been given the responsibility for finding the shortest route across Nevada. He was successful and his path would be followed by the Pony Express in 1860 and Butterfield's Overland Mail and Stage in 1861.

Silver was discovered about 22 miles west of here near Austin in 1862. Although never large producers themselves, the Austin mines proved that precious metals occurred in this part of the West and prospectors quickly made additional discoveries. With the development of mines, the demand for food and draft animals

spurred the development of ranches and farms. Soon most Nevada valleys contained farms, ranches and mining camps.

The mission of the Bureau of Land Management is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.



### Bureau of Land Management Battle Mountain Field Office

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The Battle Mountain Field Office manages more than 11 million acres of public land in the heartland of Nevada. Stretching from Interstate 80 on the north to Death Valley on the south, the district provides numerous recreation opportunities including bird watching, fishing, hiking, horseback riding and camping.

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HAMMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY  
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## Hickison Petroglyph Recreation Area

June 17, 2015

DEPOSITORY ITEM



0631



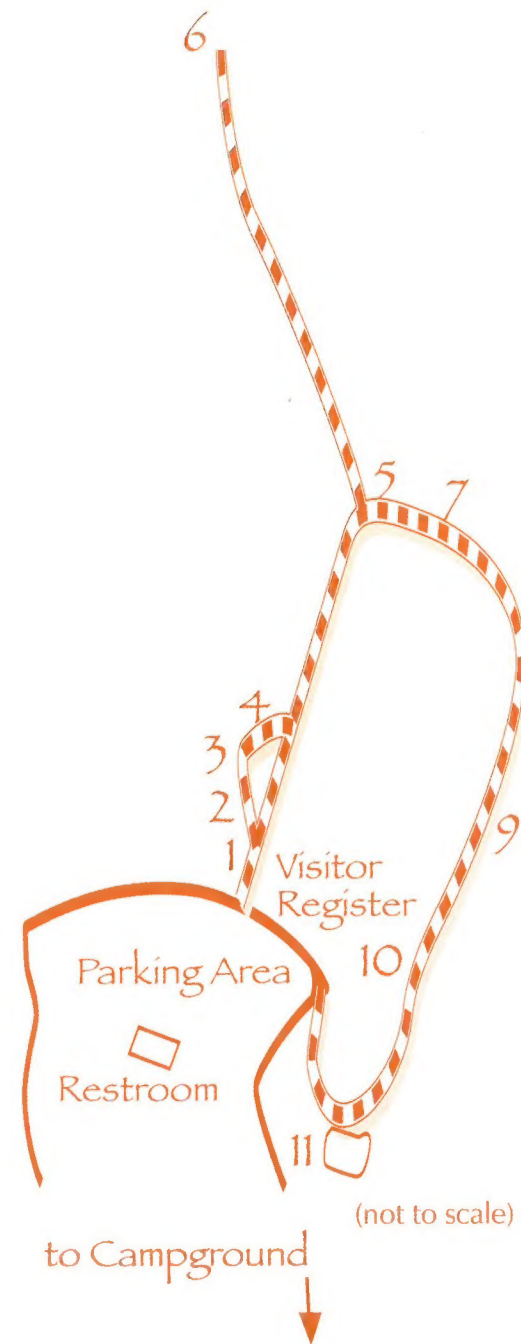
Help preserve these sites for visitors of the future. Please stay on established trails. Please do not vandalize the rocks with YOUR carvings. Please do leave your name and comments in the visitor register. Enjoy your visit, leave only footprints and take only photographs.

## Self-Guided Tour

**1** Pinyon Pine (*Pinus monophylla*) This small, pitchy pine tree was an important source of food for the Native Americans of this area. The cones produce large, tasty nuts which were stored for winter food. Pinyon nuts are still gathered and are an important commercial product of public lands. Pinyon and bristlecone pines are Nevada's state trees.

**2** There are several petroglyph panels along this cliff face. All are typical of the central Great Basin curvilinear style. Many of the glyphs are scratched, like those immediately in front of you. A few are incised or pecked. Exactly who carved these designs and when they were carved is unknown.

## Trail Map



**3** The petroglyphs at this site may represent hunting or fertility magic—or they may merely be prehistoric graffiti or doodling. Many archaeologists believe that the horseshoe-shaped glyph is a female symbol. Also, note the historic graffiti to your right. “RY” may have been one of Captain James Simpson’s crew.

**4** This is one of the most elaborate panels at this site. Note the complex intersecting curved and straight lines.

**5** At this point you have two choices: you may go left to the U.S. Hwy overlook, about 3/10 mile, or you may turn right and skip to Station 7.

**6** The portion of U.S. Hwy 50 you can see from this point roughly follows the routes of Fremont (1845) and Simpson (1859).

**7** Scenic overlook The Toiyabe Mountain Range is to the left. The valley is Big Smoky, named by Fremont because of the naturally occurring hydrocarbon haze. The Toiyabe Mountain Range is to the right.

**8** Sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.) This fragrant shrub is the state flower of Nevada and was used by Native Americans for medicine, dye and fiber. The leaves were used for tea and as incense. The bark was used for dye and to make cord and rope. Sandals made of sagebrush bark have been found in several dry caves throughout Nevada.

**9** There are five glyphs on this panel, two horseshoe shapes and one that appears to be a bird track (right and two sets of pecked parallel lines (left).

**10** Indian rice grass (*Oryzopsis hymenoides*) Another important source of food for Native Americans, this grass, also called sand-

grass, produces a small, dark seed that was harvested.

**11** Boulder with petroglyphs The glyphs on this boulder are quite different from those found elsewhere at this site, although they still conform to the curvilinear style. At the base of the boulder in front of you is what appears to be an animal; this is the only zoomorphic glyph at this site.

